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Conquest, Robert

~~Sect 4-2 Penkovsky~~  
PAPERS

CIA-03.2

# Penkovsky Papers

From Dr Robert Conquest

Sir, Owing to travel, I have only today seen *The Times* Diary in your issue of April 29, which alleges that the *Penkovsky Papers* have now been proved a fabrication, and attacks me for maintaining the opposite.

It is true that students of Soviet affairs have on occasion endorsed, or partially endorsed, fakes (as with Deutscher and Carr in the cases of "Budu Mdivani" and the "Litvinov Diaries" respectively): and had your *Diarist's* assertion been true, I would naturally have admitted my error. But it is not.

All that even the egregious Senate Committee's report on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, which your *Diarist* quotes, in fact says is that the book was prepared and written by CIA "agency assets", but on the basis of the "actual case materials". But this is no more than a hostile way of saying that the materials came through the CIA (who were, rather naturally, Colonel Penkovsky's American contacts), and that thereafter they were translated and edited by someone in the CIA's confidence. There is nothing new here, let alone any proof of "palpable forgery". And that such editing

took place has never been disputed: it is indeed stated in the book itself.

This is obviously not an entirely satisfactory situation, but it leaves the question of authenticity as one of judgment of the actual text. Criticism of it, as against mere anti-CIA abuse, has been based solely on critics' misunderstandings of trivia, and on amateur telepsychology ("Colonel Penkovsky would not have . . ."). Until the CIA releases the original "case material", as I hope it will, one can only say that the arguments for general authenticity (and the negative arguments against "forgery") remain incomparably stronger than their contraries. At the very least, the inexpert intuitions of Mr Bregan cannot be taken very seriously, any more than your *Diarist's* attempt to squeeze implications out of the report of the Church Committee. That Committee has itself been attacked in the United States even by liberal columnists as largely a politically motivated farce. To find *Times* contributors who go a good deal further is a little disturbing.

Yours faithfully,

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May 12.